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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

INFORMATION REPORT

COUNTRY USSR

SUBJECT USSR Merchant Vessel Sighted

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1. [redacted] on 12 Apr 53, at approximately 0900 and while passing through the Hokkaido Straits near Japan, [redacted] a USSR merchant ship probably a whaler. [redacted] estimated 20 or 25 years old and approximately 350' long with 60' beam, was first observed about four miles dead ahead on a collision course. Both vessels maintained their respective courses for two miles before maneuvering to allow safe passage. [redacted] the USSR vessel passed about one quarter of a mile abeam [redacted] Her course was westerly.
2. The outward appearance of the vessel reflected that she was badly in need of maintenance. The hull was rusty and the gear showed definite signs of deterioration. The ship had a clipper type bow and a plumb stern. A gun was observed mounted on the deck close to the bow and is believed by [redacted] to have been a gun to harpoon whales. The superstructure was blocklike with smoke stack aft. The bridge appeared to be made of wood and semi-circular in shape. A windbreaker had been built around the bridge as a shield. Aft of the bridge were two wooden lifeboats. From the aft end of the superstructure no gear could be seen except for a large boom presumably used to haul whale carcasses aboard. On the fantail was a small deckhouse which could be used as a storehouse or for crew quarters. The name of the vessel was printed on the bow and stern but was not legible.
3. [redacted] officers and crewmen aboard the ship but [redacted] no women. The officers and crew members were dressed in dungarees and foul weather gear, none of the men aboard were wearing uniforms. No attempts were made by crew members of either ship to exchange greetings or to communicate.
4. Sketch of the USSR vessel:

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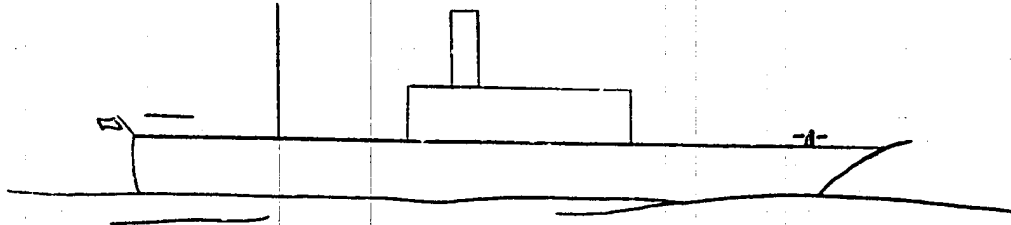
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